critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
MU 2-0328 T. M. KRAUS

April 14,1954 Vol VI No 3 $10 year-NYC Theatre Newsletter-Ad Mgr-B Gilmore PL7-6300

New York Theatre Diary

No Other Ground- Originals Only 4/16/54. A New farce by Alexander Bunsen directed by Tom Hill...Now You See It-Longacre 4/19/54. Magic show with Milbourne Christopher...Hamlet- Jan Hus 4/19/54. Shakespeare Guild Festival Company presents the historical play,directed by Herbert Kramer...The Golden Apple-moves to Alvin 4/20/54 Indoor Sport- Diamond Horsehoe 4/28/54. New comedy by Jack Perry with Lionel Stander, Steven Hill presented by Anthony Parella. Refreshments and dancing after the play.

Current New York Theatre Reviews

Anniversary Waltz- Broadhurst 4/7/54. Split notices greeted the new Jerome Chodorov-Joseph Fields comedy starring Kitty Carlisle and Macdonald Carey. News, Mirror and World Telegram & Sun critics enjoyed the domedy about the problems that turn up at a 15th wedding celebration. Moss Hart's direction shared equal billing with the playing and writing. But, the other daily critics panned it lightly for being machine made, rather than life-like, Several noted that the audience enjoyed itself despite this critical judgement. Most reported the vicarious thrill of watching two TV sets being busted. Watts,Post, summed up the dissenting viewpoint by stating that though there is quite a lot to laugh over, it seems unsatisfactory because it is machine made rather than genuine and likeable.

By the Beautiful Sea- Majestic 4/8/54.100% raves for Shirley Booth filed by the NY daily reviewers, but there is a difference of opinion on the merits of the new musical. Times, News, World Telegram & Sun, and Journal American aisle-sitters found enough entertainment to recommend it. Next to Miss Booth Mae Barnes rated the best notices. Jo Mielziner's sets and Irene Sharaff's costumes again won applause from all. Generally staging and performing rated better mentions than either the book by Herbert and Dorothy Fields, the music by Arthur Schwartz or the lyrics by Mr Fields. Mary Harmon also was singled out for special notice by several of the critics. Critics on the con side vetoed project mostly because the dull script and lyrics didn't live up to the star. Plot, stated Kerr,Herald Tribune, was always pedestrian and sometimes even incoherent. Coleman,Mirror,rated show as "so-so", though he considered it worth seeing for its star alone. Watts,Post, suggests the evening would have been more fun if the book had been thrown away altogether.

The Magic and The Loss- Booth 4/9/54. Chapman,News, filed sole pro notice for Julian Funt's new play, and even that wasn't an outright okay. He noted the excellent quality in the production- in the writing of Funt, the direction of Michael Gordon, and the acting of Uta Hagen, Robert Preston and young Charles Taylor. But they all seemed pointless because he was never able to determine either the purpose or the direction of the drama. Remainder panned it as dull,non-theatrical,case study in child psychology. Kerr,Herald Tribune,thought the acting only gave a casual veneer to the script. It didn't turn its self-pity into genuinely moving theatre. Tedious,labeled Watts,Post, while McClain, Journal American, blamed failure of stated issues to come across with sufficient impact. Hawkins, WT&S, thought show would profit by being less civilized.

Drama Desk Meeting

The two guests of the next Drama Desk meeting, April 1[illegible] at Sardi's at 12 30 PM will be Fire Commissioner Edward ~~Cavanagh, Jr~~ and ~~Tom~~ Patterson, ~~Director of Canada's~~ Shakespeare Festival.

Off Broadway

Many actors and actresses have moved from Off Broadway to Broadway this season. The latest is Jayne Heller who moved from her role as Ann Boleyn in the Blackfriars production of PRAISE OF FOLLY to a role in the cast of Sabrina Fair this week.

Originals Only new production opens April 16, No Legal Grounds a farce by Alexander Bunsen. One Foot to Sea will continue until then...The Crucible will be presented at Cooper Union Thursday & Friday, April 15 and 16...A Whitney Fund grant has been given to the production of Giraudoux' Electra which will be presented at the Henry St Playhouse starting April 19. Barbara Leslie is starred in cast directed by Archie Smith...ANTA has cancelled its preview of the Shakespeare Guild's Hamlet due to the recent Equity dispute at the Jan Hus playhouse...The Lively Arts production at Theatre De Lys has been postponed to next season by John Cornell and Jean Adra.

The Boy With A Cart, the first production of the Broadway Chapel Players at Broadway Tabernacle Church which is being presented on Sundays at 5 30 PM, drew 5 pro reviews. All praised group's production, staged by Richard Barr. Bill Penn, Cynthia Latham and Florida Friebus were applauded for fine performances. Shanley, Times, summed it up as a decidedly worthwhile enterprise that should appeal to any theatregoer whose tastes are not confined to the commercial stage. Hawkins, WT&S, found it inspirational. Down, Variety, thought quality of performances and direction frequently brought the production to a sharper and more intriguing level than the sometimes obscure and pretentious poetry of Fry. Kerner, Women's Wear, billed it as a fervent and tasteful job, while Greenberg, Show Business, okayed it. Latter would have wished for more robustness in the playing at certain points.

Sound of Hunting revival at the Cherry Lane by Trio Productions was panned by Shanley, Times for being a routine and inconclusive script. Actors, he noted, did a commendable job with material on hand.

Vaudeville

Julius LaRosa heads the new stage show at Loew's State April 17. This is the first stage presentation at the house since Dec 1947. Others on the bill include Ella Fitzgerald, and Archie Bleyer and his Orchestra. Also Herbert & Stanley and Wells & Four Fays...New Palace show features Jackie Bright, Slim Timblin, Jerry Cooper, Bob Rollins, Leslie & Lawrence, Olveras and Larry & Trudy Leung.

Theatre Book Comments

"Men and Superman" by A H Nethercot (Harvard Press) is a scholarly discourse on characters in GBS plays, sums up Down, Variety. Author has done an exhaustive, creditable job, though theatre folk may be inclined to find it something less than helpful.

Theatre Record Comments

Original cast albums of Kismet and The Girl in Pink Tights, both Columbia, are recommended by Coleman, Mirror. Critic also reminds of fine album of Can-Can turned out by Capitol. Also approved were RCA Victor's Macbeth by Old Vic company.

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Green Room Department

OFF BROADWAY SUCCESS...Reasons for the popularity of Off Broadway theatre this season are presented by Kerr,Herald Tribune, and Dash, Women's Wear. Former believes that the new quality "discipline" has made the differences in the groups which were once only sincere. In the last few seasons,Kerr continues, the acting companies have begun to take on very marked and thoroughly unified styles. The energy had existed before, the coherence had not. Dash marks as the foremost reason the fact that the off Broadway groups are presenting better plays than before. Other reasons Dash listed include the fact that plays and players have made the switch from Off Broadway to Broadway, the fact that some Broadway flops have been staged successfully off Broadway, the recognition by the critics, and finally the arrival of the Phoenix Theatre on 2nd Ave and 12th St.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Critics await eagerly the day that will announce the news that a new theatre will be constructed in a new office building, relays Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun...Watts,Post,is surprised to find the English drama reviewers shocked at some of the lines in Pal Joey, remembering England as the birthplace of the Restoration farces...$3.60 for the G&S troupe at the President with only piano and organ accompaniment, seems too much to Watt,News. Playgoers get full orchestras for the same price at the Phoenix and City Center.

FIRST NIGHTS DEFINED...A medieval proceeding having nothing whatever to do with a love of the theatre,Moss Hart defines in Herald Tribune's "Devil's Dictionary of the Theatre." The passionate desire of first nighters,he continues, to take part in the ritual, and the grotesque scramble for seats in the fashionable locations represent a kind of mental bankruptcy. While the director of Anniversary Waltz defined most sins and virtues of theatre, he admittedly skipped "critics" out of cowardice.

AWARD BUSINESS...George Jean Nathan ,Journal American, recorded his personal choices for the NY Drama Critics Circle awards. They are Teahouse of the August Moon, Ondine and Golden Apple...Morehouse,WT&S, is sure either Tea and Sympathy or Teahouse of August Moon will win...Everyone who deserves a prize will probably win one during the current award season, predicts Chapman, News.

FIRE DEPT RULES...Recent closing down of off Broadway theatres by the new Fire Dept Commissioner Edward F Cavanagh,Jr, has a vaugely familiar ring to Sylvester, News. It is again the story of a new city official finding out that show business is a helpless target for any kind of attack. Drama editor suggests that Bellevue Hospital is a real panic trap, as is any police precinct house in NYC.

Pros & Cons by TMK

Anniversary Waltz is a poor combination of Junior Miss and Separate Rooms. Except for the vicarious thrill of watching an actor kick in two TV sets the comedy has little that is original ,clever or humorous. But the market at which the production is aimed,namely those couples celebrating their 15th wedding anniversary, should keep the show open for months. But keep the kids at home, they may get new and expensive ideas about TV sets.

One of the forgotten reasons for the expansion of the Off Broadway theatre scene is the sad fact that actors will work for small salaries in the hope of being "seen." Concessions by all unions are the real reason for the new Off Broadway movement...Entrance to one uptown theatre which has only one set of doors might be checked by Fire Dept...Add to Off Broadway legend the recent case of the press agent who has disappeared.

The court hearing of the Circle in the Square involving alleged Fire Department violations has been adjourned until April 23 . The theatre producers sought and received the two week adjournment. Neither the Circle [illegible]he Club Theatre has as yet announced the location of their new homes. The Circ[illegible]s roduction of The Girl Girl on the Via Flaminia has been reviewed uptownonly by Atkinson,Times. He found uptown version just as well done and moving as the downtown production.

Plays

Picnic closed...President Theatre is for rent for summer months...The Immoralist is scheduled to close May 1...Robert Penn, Can-Can,plans to present Jimmy Savo in his first NY stage appearance since 1943 next season in Little World,Hello.

People

Estimated NYC attendance at 32 shows, on and off Broadway for current week by "CD" is 176,000...Trio of well known theatre people died this week. Frederick Lonsdale died in London at age 73, Fritzi Scheff died in NY at age 74, and Father Eiben, director of Union City,NJ's "Veronica 's Veil Passion play, died in West Springfield,Mass,at age 63...Rep Dorn, R-NY, introduced a bill in Congress to authorize President Eisenhower to present a gold medal to Irving Berlin for composing "God Bless America."

Award Dept

The Golden Apple won the"Page One Award for Theatre" from the New York Newspaper Guild...10th annual Derwent Awards for best supporting actor and actress of season will be voted April 28...Teahouse of August Moon picked as the best play by an American author by "Theatre Club"...NY Drama Critics Circle Awards to be voted April 13.

Summer Playhouses

Bucks County Playhouse,New Hope,Pa, will open May 29 with Mike Ellis and Howard Hoyt as the new managers. The Moon is Blue with Jerome Cowan is the first show. Several tryouts are included in the schedule.

Theatre Record Notes

RCA Victor will record original cast album of The Golden Apple...Decca has signed Kaye Ballard,Golden Apple, to record the top songs from her current show...Alfred Drake has recorded several popular tunes for Cadence Records...Columbia Records will record Victor Borge's one man show " Comedy in Music."

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